

1995

ancestor

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my bloodline is there on the shelf
where fetal pigs and pickled salamanders
throw glassy-eyed stares from gleaming quart jars,
where kindred spirits bobble up in aldehyde marinade.

blood is an inside river, red replica to ancient sea,
but the tide is swelling in my blue veins
and moon is a jellyfish caught on the cloud.

I was amphibian once, and small, hardly higher
than the song of a frog and like a frog I drifted
in a world no one could fathom
prune-shriveled pink, blind, my legs wound
tight as clock springs.

is every mother an ocean, every child tethered
like soundless submarines deep in the amber harbor?

blood is an inside river, running red to the age-old sea,
but the tide is swelling in my blue veins
and moon is a jellyfish caught on the cloud.

Teresa Tan